

**Board of Finance
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 22, 2016**

1. Call to Order: Chairman David Hosmer called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

2. Roll Call: Michael Dougherty, Frederick Chmura, David Hosmer, Glen Lessig, David Fortin, David Richardson, Roy Bradrick and Jeffrey Kelleher.

Absent with notice: Ronald Cabana.

Others: Julie Woodland, Allan Walker, Orion Newall-Vuillemont, Richard Kryzak, Ernest St. Jean, Mitchell Eaffy, Michael Bernardi, Linda Bernadi, Clifford Davis, Valerie Law, Wayne Durst, Viktor Toth, Jill Grant, Tina Lajoie, Preston Shultz, Megan Bard-Morse, Karen Munroe, Donna Stefanik and Karen Fitzpatrick

3. Seat Alternate if Necessary: Michael Dougherty, seconded by David Fortin, made a motion to seat Roy Bradrick for this meeting. **Motion passed unanimously.**

4. Approve minutes from the March 15, 2016: Fred Chmura, seconded by Glen Lessig, made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. **Motion passed unanimously.**

5. New Business:

A. Review Prop 46 Allowable: David Richardson feels that it is too early to figure out what the Prop 46 limits will be, especially in the Board of Education budget. He feels that the calculations cannot be done until after the Public Hearing in April. He feels that the final Special Education numbers have not been arrived at.

Treasurer Donna Stefanik respectfully disagreed with Mr. Richardson. She says that only allowable to Prop 46 if cut may result in adjustments in the Prop 46 calculations. She also reminded the Board of Finance that a legal ad will need to be placed in the newspaper and that figures will need to be in that ad.

Glen Lessig asked Board of Education if they knew what the reimbursement for the Special Education will be from the State. It was predicted that the reimbursement would be around 77%. It could be lower or higher.

Glen Lessig, seconded by David Fortin, made a motion to adopt this current Prop 46 calculation as a guideline. **Motion passed unanimously.**

B. Combined Budgets and Revenues: Treasurer Donna Stefanik said that the numbers presented tonight were conservative and similar to last years. She informed the Board that the State has not been able to deposit the first installment into the Municipal Revenue Sharing Additional Sale Tax funds, and may not have funds to make the second installment on June 30th. If that money comes in at a later date, those funds can be used to offset the following year's budget. She also reminded the Board that next year will be a revaluation year, and that there will be a tax sale in April. These events will mean that the Revenue numbers will need to be adjusted.

David Hosmer also pointed out that these Revenue numbers would be subject to change once the State passed a budget.

David Richardson feels that both budgets are stuffed, and should be cut to reflect a zero increase. If it turns out that more money becomes available than things can be added back into the budget. Both budgets had money left over at the end of last fiscal year, and both the Board of Education and the Board of Selectmen went on a spending spree. He also feels that there is too much money in the Special Education budget, and he questioned why the Special Education budget had increased by \$267,000.00. He pointed out that the student population has declined and that the Board of Education should reflect this decrease.

Glen Lessig and Jeffrey Kelleher reminded Mr. Richardson that former Superintendent Francis Baron froze the budget early in the school year in case there was an unexpected expenditure. If that did not happen by the end of the year than the money would be used to fund projects and purchase equipment.

Glen Lessig feels that Superintendent Viktor Toth gave a great budget presentation as to the needs of the Board of Education. He feels that the budget is reasonable.

Glen Lessig made a motion to recommend that the budget be funded at the Proposition 46 allowable, with an 80%/20% split. **Motion failed for lack of a second.**

David Fortin, seconded by Michael Dougherty, made a motion for guidance purposes only to decrease the Board of Education budget by \$224,000.00 and the General Government budget by \$56,000.00. This would be an 80%/20% split. This would make the Board of Education budget \$16,852,004.00 and the General Government budget \$5,442,288.00.

Glen Lessig argued that the Board of Education made a strong presentation as to why they needed the funds. He felt that it was not right to fund the budget below the Proposition 46 allowable.

Superintendent Viktor Toth asked the Board of Finance to please reconsider the \$224,000.00 cut in the Education in budget. Since that figure could not be cut from the Special Education line item, it would have to be cut from the Pre-K thru 8th grade budget.

Donna Stefanik reminded the Board of Finance that if Special Education was not properly funded the Board of Education would have to come back to the Town for an additional appropriation. This could seriously undermine the Town's Fund balance.

After further discussion, Chairman Hosmer called for a vote on the motion on the table. **Those voting in favor of the motion:** Michael Dougherty, Frederick Chmura, David Hosmer, David Fortin and Roy Bradrick. **Voting against the motion:** Glen Lessig. **Motion passed.**

6. Old Business:

A. Update on Policy Manual – Tabled: This item has been tabled until after the budget.

B. Draft Internal Service Fund – Tabled: It has been tabled until after the budget, but will be finalized before June 30, 2016.

C. Email Address for BOF -Tabled: It was decided to resolve this issue this evening.

The Board of Finance asked First Selectman Allan Walker if there would be a cost to the Town for the email accounts. Mr. Walker explained that Savage Systems would charge for each account located on the Town server. Gmail would be free and create separation between personal email and email used to conduct Town business.

Roy Bradrick, seconded by Michael Dougherty, made a motion to continue to use personal email accounts for communication as long as Treasurer Donna Stefanik was cc'd on all emails. **Motion passed unanimously.**

7. Citizens Participation: Jill Grant stated that the surplus that was available at the end of last fiscal year was used by the Board of Education towards the Health Care account and towards the repairs and updates at the schools. She reminded David Richardson that he had commended the Board of Education on all of the projects that had been accomplished with some of the surplus funds at the September 8, 2015 Board of Finance meeting.

She also reminded the Board of Finance that Woodstock was last in the State for per pupil spending, and that Woodstock was fortunate to have Woodstock Academy as the Town's high school option. The Town of Woodstock could not afford a school of the Academy's quality.

Ms Grant further stated that she was disappointed that the Board of Finance had not decided to fund the budget at the Prop 46 Allowable limit.

Chairman Hosmer reminded her and the audience that this could be amended at the Public Hearing.

David Richardson agreed with Ms. Grant that Woodstock Academy was an excellent educational bargain, and that was one of the reasons that the cost of per pupil spending was able to remain so low.

Tax Collector Linda Bernardi read a statement to the Board of Finance and the audience that she takes her job very seriously, has a collection rate of 98.5%, and she has kept collections to within a 3-year delinquent rate. She has always received excellent audits, and has compassion for the tax payers who are struggling yet continue to try to pay their taxes in a timely fashion. She has been co-endorsed by both the Republican and the Democratic parties and that she is very proud to be on the Town Hall team.

She explained that she was quite upset to have her name, her husband's name (as the chairman of the Board of Education), as well as the First Selectman's name mentioned in an article in the "Yankee Institute" as receiving the insurance stipend. She also pointed out that David Fortin's wife is also a seated member on the Board of Education. She stated that she wanted to know how and why these three names, were singled out, and not the other people who receive the stipend. People who receive the stipend feel threatened and intimidated.

Mr. Bernardi also wondered how the reporter from the "Yankee Institute" got his name in regards to this issue. Since his name was not mentioned at any time during the only meeting the "Yankee Institute" reporter attended.

David Richardson and David Fortin, who were quoted in the article, at first denied knowing how the reporter from the "Yankee Institute" got the names of the people who received the stipend, or why the reporter published the names that he did.

David Richardson explained that he requested a list of all of who are paid the stipend from the Town under the Freedom of Information law but did not receive a list. Instead, he received a list of employee compensation from the Town Attorney, and from this information he deduced who he believes receives the insurance and who receives the stipend. He admitted he shared his conclusions with with Board of Finance members and also with the “Yankee Institute” reporter.

Mitchell Eaffy stated that by publishing some of the names of the people who received the stipend was done as a form of public shaming.

After some voices were raised about what qualifications were necessary fpr audience participation (age and tax payer status) Chairman David Hosmer allowed Woodstock Academy Orion Newall-Vuillemont to speak. Orion Newall-Vuillemont pointed out that this article was all over the Internet and being commented on by parents. He felt that it was wrong to publish the names of the people who received the stipend and a type of bullying..

Selectman Mitchell Eaffy objected to the characterization that the General Government budget is stuffed. The State keeps cutting aid to towns, and unfunded mandates are passed on to the taxpayer. This is reflected in the budget.

Mr. Eaffy also stated that he has been listening to the stipend debate for the last year, and that this debate has poisoned the well in regards to negotiating the next union contract.

David Fortin does not understand how he has poisoned the well. He states that his letter outlining his concerns about the stipend was not handed out until the February 9th meeting. He explained that the letter was tabled until the March 15th meeting, and then dropped off of the agenda, and became part of the General Budget presentation.

Julie Woodland is disgusted with the name calling and intimidation tactics. She urged the other Board of Finance members to stop this behavior at their meetings. She warned the Board that allowing a fellow Board member to reveal the names of specific employees who opt in or out of health insurance coverage is a HIPPA violation, which exposes their Board and the Town to legal action and expensive fines.

Preston Shultz felt that it was unethical for the First Selectman to negotiate a contract where he gets a benefit. No other town in the area gets a stipend in this amount. He feels this is not a health care issue. A public employee’s salary is public information and if a public employee does not like it they can find another job.

Megan Bard-Morse stated that she was a reporter and she knows that a reporter would not be sent to cover a meeting in the town the size of Woodstock unless they had been invited. She was curious as to why only David Richardson and David Fortin were quoted in the article. She also stated that personal emails fall under FOI rules.

David Richardson stated that he had been in contact with the reporter well before the meeting. He also disagrees with Ms Bard Morse as to whether his personal emails fall under FOI rules.

Karen Munroe and Cliff Davis are very disappointed that the Board of Finance has not given them direction on how to adjust the Board of Education budget. They are disappointed that the budget is not

going to be funded at the maximum under Prop 46. Cliff Davis thinks that the budget should remain the same until final numbers are arrived at.

David Hosmer reminded them that could change at the Public Hearing. This should be considered a target for them.

8. Correspondence & Announcements: David Fortin passed out a letter and read from it explaining how disappointed he was on how his letter of February 9th was handled. He still has concerns about how the stipend is being handled and he would like this issue to be added back unto the agenda. David Hosmer agreed that it could be.

9. Adjournment : David Fortin, seconded by Michael Dougherty, made a motion to adjourn at 8:55pm.
Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine G French

Clerk